

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

## 22nd CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 28, 2003

### **HINCHEY AND COLLEAGUES GIVE GROUND ZERO RESCUE WORKERS TICKETS TO STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH**

#### ***Effort Calls Attention to Lack of Funding for Health Screenings***

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today spoke at a press conference to announce that he is giving his extra ticket for the president's State of the Union address to one of the September 11<sup>th</sup> World Trade Center rescue workers. Led by U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney (NY-14), a group of Congress members has decided to make this gesture to draw attention to the need for federal funding of a program to provide health screenings and evaluations of those who worked at Ground Zero.

"The Bush Administration has a lot on its mind right now," said Hinchey. "But we cannot allow the heroes of September 11th to be relegated to the back burner. I'm sure the president wants to do everything he can to ensure the long-term health of these brave men and women. It has become clear, however, that we have not succeeded in bringing the problem to his attention. That's why we decided to give Ground Zero rescue workers the opportunity to bring their case to President Bush's doorstep."

Many of the laborers, police officers, firefighters, and rescue workers who worked to save lives, recover remains and clean up the wreckage at the site of the terrorist attacks have developed respiratory problems in the 16 months since then. Studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New England Journal of Medicine detail a much higher incidence of debilitating throat and lung disorders and bronchial afflictions, and other related illnesses, in those who worked at Ground Zero compared to the general population.

Under the auspices of Mount Sinai's Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine, a program was established with state and federal funds to screen and evaluate the health of these workers. On Monday Mt. Sinai released data on a random sample of workers screened last summer, showing that 78 percent had suffered lung ailments and 88 percent had experienced ear, nose and throat problems.

Current funding will only allow 9,000 of the 35,000 workers involved in Ground Zero recovery efforts to be screened. An additional \$90 million in federal funding is necessary to provide screening for the remaining 26,000. President Bush vetoed the funding after Congress included it in a spending bill last August. Senator Hillary Clinton (NY) has succeeded in placing the funds in a bill currently being considered.

Each Member of the House of Representatives is given one gallery pass for the president's address to the joint session of Congress. Rep. Hinchey's pass will be used by John Kelly, a New York City firefighter.